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ABSTRACT

Highlights and excerpts from public hearings in Cook County, Illinois, on student truancy, suspension and expulsion are presented. The hearings represent an attempt to determine how many youths out of school due to truancy, expulsion or suspension are provided with an alternative education program by their schools and whether the out-of-school youth is engaging in delinquent acts. Twenty-six people testified; all but one (a parent) were professional people working directly or indirectly with out-of-school juveniles--authorities from social and law enforcement agencies, school administrators, principals, deans, attendance officers and juvenile court representatives. (KM)

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REMARKS AND EXCERPTS FROM

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON TRUANCY AND EXPULSION

DECEMBER 13TH AND 14TH, 1972

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On December 13 and 14, 1972, the Educational Service Region of Cook County held public hearings on the matter of student truancy, suspension and expulsion. The hearings were held in an attempt to determine how many youngsters out of school due to truancy, expulsion or suspension are provided with an alternative education program by their schools, and further to determine if the juvenile out of school is engaging in delinquent acts.

Prior to the hearings it had been estimated that there were upwards of 10,000 juveniles out of school and not enrolled in any alternative programs because the majority of schools in suburban Cook County do not have the means to provide such education. In most instances a child who is expelled from a school, if he or she is to continue to get an education, must be enrolled in a private school. Families unable to afford private schools have no place to turn. Our estimate that 10,000 juveniles were out of school was gleaned through discussion with various agencies. Testimony showed this figure to be rather low inasmuch as it was learned that the number of juveniles out of school in 1971 was placed at 48,718. The projected figure for 1972 was lower, however.

Prior to the hearings, the Educational Service Regions's truant officer's records showed that in one suburban Cook County School District, out of a total of 83 truants that were reported to our office, more than 40 were found to have had police confrontations for such acts as larceny and burglary, vandalism, assault and battery and malicious mischief.

The Educational Service Region of Cook County under Superintendent Richard J. Martwick employs three truant officers whose job it is to enforce that part of the Illinois School Code Statutes which state that any child between the ages of 7 and 16 must regularly attend school.

From September 1971 to September 1972, 1200 cases of truancy were reported to the Cook County Educational Service Region office.

Research on this problem revealed that 90% of the truancies occurred among 15 - 16 year olds - 60% truant were boys - 40% girls.

Of the truancies reported to this office, 40% of the cases involved chronic offenders. In 60% of the cases, a letter from the truant officer to the youngster's parents served to correct the situation.

On the average, one out of every four truancies reported to this office was taken to Juvenile or Circuit Court.

While it is the responsibility of the truant officer to see that the law is enforced, court action is taken only as a last resort. Cook County Educational Service Region truant officers try to establish personal contact with the student and parents and the school administrator to decide the appropriate means of dealing with each individual.

The Truancy Department of the Educational Service Region does not view itself as a punitive agency, but rather it recognizes that truancy is an anti-social act too often progressing to acts of juvenile delinquency. So although the Educational Service Region truant officers must enforce the law, the primary goal is to enlist the help of all involved to alter behavioral defects which obstruct a youngster's continuing his education.

Twenty-six people testified at the hearings, all but one (a parent who testified anonymously) were professional people working directly and indirectly with out-of-school juveniles. Testifying were authorities from social and law enforcement agencies, school administrators, principals, deans, attendance officers and juvenile court representatives.

Testimony presented at the public hearings is detailed in a transcribed report covering 290 pages.

Those testifying based their remarks on their experiences and observations, consequently there are many different and divergent opinions noted throughout the testimony.

It was made clear however, the juveniles out of school as the result of truancy, expulsion or suspension have police contact for any number of offenses.

It was also made clear that there are few school districts which provide alternative education programs for such youngsters and a continuing education program that suits the needs of the individual juvenile who cannot adjust to the regular school regimen is sorely needed. Schools providing such programs have been quite successful.

We have one witness stating that the problem of truancy is one for which the schools must be responsible, while another states that truancy is a symptom whose cause rests solely with the parents.

The Compulsory Attendance Law is attacked by one witness who states that it should be lowered to age 14, another suggests age 15 and another witness says that it should not be changed inasmuch as a youngster under age 16 has not reached the age of discretion.

An open hearing allows participants an opportunity to express their views, and while you will find agreement as well as disagreement on many of the issues presented here, there is a basic agreement that truancy is a problem that affects our entire society.

The following are highlights of some of the remarks made.

Further on, we have excerpted some of the testimony.

GENERAL REMARKS REGARDING TRUANCY

- . There is no uniform system for reporting truants throughout the city and county, therefore, there are no exact figures on the number of juveniles out of school. (p. 10)
- . The basic attitude of the community toward its schools and youngster is crucial in maintaining standards. (p. 11)
- . Truancy is only a symptom - it is rare that we ask what is the reason for a youngster's truancy - what are the contributing factors. We continue to treat symptoms instead of causes. (p. 234)
- . Schools must be viewed as institutions in and of the community. They no longer gain their legitimacy just by being the school. (p. 109)
- . The Compulsory Attendance Law compels that the student attend school, not that he learn. The words of this law do not address themselves to the education that's supposed to be going on in a student's mind. It's indicative of a repressive, orderly, but not necessarily educative function being provided by the schools. They are storage places for young human beings. (p. 146)
- . No attorney generally represents a juvenile at a court hearing. (p. 173)
- . It seldom fails that where the school takes an interest in the child and his welfare and particularly the welfare of the family that the family responds by sending the child to school or at least making an attempt. (p. 190)
- . To attack the law or handle the truant case at court and find a minor as a truant in its simplest form, does nothing. (p. 43)
- . Learning has been changed from an exciting experience to one which is a forced, unhealthy choice. (p. 46)
- . There appears to be a one track system of educating every youngster to get into college. (p. 46)
- . If the courts start mandating what the schools have to do, then we will have real problems. (p. 49)

SUGGESTED CAUSES OF TRUANCY

- . The pattern of truancy is often set before a youngster enters school, i. e., parents' attitude towards education, etc. (p. 233)
- . Too often the parents are unable or unwilling to take enough interest in the child to follow up and see to it that the child gets to school. (p. 177)
- . Gang boundaries: If a child went to a certain school he would cross a gang boundary and put himself in serious jeopardy. (p. 177)
- . Special education classes: Educable mentally handicapped or trainable mentally handicapped students find a sterile type of atmosphere and lose interest in school. (p. 187)
- . Failure of social agencies, police, courts to sufficiently examine the problem of why a youngster is truant. (p. 193)
- . The primary cause for truancy and dropouts rests squarely on the educational system and its personnel. To focus on the individual or his parents would be a gross disservice and in essence a total whitewash. (p. 50)
- . Majority of Juvenile Court cases shows that only a very few of the number of truancy cases or dropouts is caused by a disturbed home situation. (p. 30)
- . Majority of cases is a result of a student being turned off and turned out by the educational system and its personnel. (p. 50)
- . Schools are primarily interested in dealing with the system rather than with the student. Little concern about why the youngster is not in school. (p. 204)
- . Before the child reaches age 5 or 6, the groundwork is laid for truancy that will occur later. If the parents don't prepare the child for the school experience the child will come to school at a handicap which will increase as he remains in schools. (p. 233)
- . Some children not academically oriented should be prepared for the working world rather than be compelled to study subjects that prepare them for college.

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RESULTS OF TRUANCY

- . Where there is excessive truancy there is usually a higher rate of delinquency. (p. 134)
- . 48,717 youths were reported by the Chicago Police Department in 1971 as school absentees. This reflects only a part of the problem, because a youngster picked up by the police is charged with a crime, not with being absent from school. (p. 8)
- . City-wide estimate is that 7.5 per cent of the total school population are absentees because of truancy. (p. 10)
- . The "pushout" phenomena is common in suburban schools. It's easier and cheaper for the school administrator, dean, teachers and the school psychologist to "gang up" on a parent and have him withdraw the child. (p. 142)
- . At the present time (December 1972) in Chicago there are 2,250 youths on parole. Safe to estimate that 75% of these youths came to the attention of the court because of truancy and at least 85% were returned to court for subsequent hearings because of truancy problems. (p. 134)
- . Approximately 20 to 25 students are sent to the boys or girls branch of Chicago Parental School during an average week. (p. 173)
- . The same factors that lead to truancy generally lead to delinquency in terms of the parental breakdown. (p. 175)
- . Schools are counterproductive. Its response to a student who either cuts a few classes or is habitually truant is to either suspend or expel the student. (p. 205)
- . Truancy as a rule is based upon failure. The child who becomes truant generally has an extremely low self esteem--generally has a very rejecting situation in dealing with his own parents, and feels very inadequate in terms of a social situation and school therefore presents this threatening situation to him. (p. 21)

SUGGESTIONS MADE TO ALLEVIATE TRUANCY PROBLEM

- . We need programs for youth who need special help in schools by including them in programs rather than excluding them and labeling them. (p. 16)
- . Do away with the Compulsory Attendance Law. If students are to be forced to come to school, they should not come. (p. 148)
- . Lower the school leaving age. Some children are ready to leave school at age 15. We should make it possible for those children to go to work. (p. 236)
- . If high school were made optional, maybe we would have more people attend. Throw out the Average Daily Attendance for state aid. (p. 248)
- . Actively seek the support of parents, youth and the community, and especially law enforcement in the development of active programs for youth in and out of school. (p. 17)
- . Let us not concern ourselves so much with enforcing the laws of truancy, but concern ourselves more with why students are truant and work on that problem rather than with sustaining the system. (p. 212)
- . Schools are the most conservative change-resistant institutions in our society. Anything is done to protect that system as it is. (p. 215)
- . Re Compulsory Attendance Law: if we can get some type of cooperation with the agencies to strictly enforce, to take some type of action against the parent if the child does not attend school, but just don't talk about it, do something about it. (p. 233)
- . It's a matter of feeling with the child--doing all you possibly can do. There are times when you go into the home and you find out a little bit more than you do when you sit behind the desk. This is how some of our teachers get a different insight on the reasons why the child is acting the way he is. (p. 227)

SUGGESTIONS MADE TO ALLEVIATE TRUANCY PROBLEM - continued

- . For non-academically oriented students, institute a work/study program immediately upon the child's entering high school. (p. 234)
- . Listen to what the kids themselves have to say. As adults, we very seldom listen to what kids say. We talk to them and at them, but very seldom with them. (p. 211)
- . If we could bring some efforts to bear early at the elementary level, we perhaps might reduce the number of trancies and dropouts that we encounter at the secondary level. (p. 198)

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY

Witness: Betty Begg, Director of the Division of Correctional Services of the Department of Human Resources of the City of Chicago

"...Before examining the problems of truancy, I think it is important to define truancy. Though the Illinois statutes legally define truancy, the interpretation of this definition within various school districts and individual schools raises many questions.

"...there has never been a question of the relationship of the problem of truancy to delinquent behavior. The 48,717 youths who were reported by the Chicago Police Department in 1971 as "school absentee" reflect only a part of this problem.

"...A juvenile arrested during school hours who is arrested for another crime such as shoplifting, car theft, burglary, is charged with that crime, not with school absenteeism, and he never appears in the police statistics as truant. So we are getting a false picture here.

"...In the neighborhoods where our staff works, particularly in the work we do following up with the youth and the family by the Youth Officers of the Police Department, in the three months of September, October, November of this year, the following are reported data regarding youth of school age who are arrested during school hours:

"In Lawndale, 830 youths, or 24 per cent of the total arrested during school hours. On the near north side, East Chicago Avenue, 150 youths representing 35 percent of the total arrested, were arrested during school hours and out of school. In Woodlawn, 3,600 youths representing 27 percent of the total arrests, and in the Grand Boulevard area, 1116 youths who represent 30 percent of the total arrests, were arrested during school hours. An interesting statistic is that in Uptown, representing Police District 20, there were 90

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - continued

youth in that three month period, but those 90 represented 41 percent of the total. This means that in these five areas there were a total of 2,686 youths arrested during the daytime, representing a range of from 24 percent to 41 percent of total arrests in that district.

"...I think it's time that we looked at the pattern of monetary payment from the state which is based on attendance rate per pupil rather than performance basis for all school districts.

"...We must begin to try to program for youth who need special help in schools by inclusion rather than the continual practice of exclusion and labeling.

"We must develop a basic system of unified reporting of school problems, truant, suspension, dropout, so that there is an accurate statistical definition of this problem.

"Develop a basic definition of truancy which is used by all schools and understood by the youth, the parents and the community."

WITNESS: Robert Braasch, Principal of the Audy Home for Children

"...The interesting thing about some of the youngsters is that truancy is not the problem--it's merely a solution that these kids see for their problems, and when you get some of the gang kids out on the street who are being threatened, you get girls who are being coerced into pursuits for gain, these youngsters come in and tell you bluntly that they're not about to go to school when they can't go there with any degree of safety."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

WITNESS: Bernard Karlin, Acting Superintendent of the Chicago Parental School

"...Truancy as a rule is based upon failure. Truancy, as a rule finds certain generalized situations within a child. ...this does not mean every child falls into this bag. But the child is usually failing in school. The child usually has an extremely low self esteem for himself. The child usually has a very rejecting situation in dealing with his own parents. The child really feels very inadequate in terms of a social situation, and school presents a very threatening situation to him.

"...On the other hand, a school phobic is one who is rarely, if ever, in danger of failing. His I.Q. is usually normal or way above normal. His is really a separation anxiety from his mother in which he absolutely can't stand to be away from her, but he really can't stand to be with her, and it's really a very moot and complex situation which needs a great deal of help.

"...A phobic kid stays home--that's his sickness. He can't stand to be away from his mother, so he stays there and the mother contributes in this situation making excuses."

WITNESS: Martin Roelofs, Juvenile Court representative

"...The Juvenile Court in dealing with truancy and the problem of the dropout, approaches it from the point of law. Truancy is defined as a simple violation of the Compulsory School Attendance law where a minor under the age of 16 fails to attend or is absent from his school without reasonable cause. To attack the law or handle the truant case at court and find a minor as a truant in its simplest form does nothing. The Juvenile Court has no solutions other than to force the issue back to the community, and in forcing a confrontation with the problem, and its many complications such as why does this particular minor truant from school, we can come up with basically three

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

areas that we are concerned about.

The first is from the individual student's viewpoint. Why is he truant or choose to be a dropout? There are a number of causes that we feel are relevant in this particular instance. 1) school has become boring, meaningless and a failure experience for him or her. 2) the student, when he attends school experiences feelings of dehumanization and lack of worth. 3) the student may be involved in an authority conflict with his parents and this carries over from the home to the school where the teachers act as parent substitutes, and finally, the whole situation from which the student comes may be disturbed to such a degree in which the parents do not care or show any interest in the child or his education.

"...A second area of concern which I think is more relevant is to ask the question, why do the schools produce truants or dropouts. Number one, the attitude and the behavior of school personnel, both administrators and teachers. Currently in the suburban school districts there is an overwhelmingly major attitude of disinterest in students and essentially not caring about the individual student. Secondly, there's overconcern on the part of the school administrators with establishing rules and regulations concerning behavior within the setting of education, which in far too many cases, place the school in an atmosphere of being a prison system. Many of these rules I would question as to their relevance and indicate in far too many cases too many of us feel that they're very petty and only cause and set up friction between the school and the student. Third, school administrators make excessive use and misuse of suspensions, expulsions and the tracking system which they use in arranging and scheduling a student's program.

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY -cont'd

"In far too many of the schools in the suburban community there is, in our opinion, a gross violation of the compulsory school attendance law on the part of the school system in which many educators, when they deal with the youngster under the age of 16, if he is a problem youngster, will threaten the youngster and the parents with going before the board of education for expulsion, and then on an underhanded level offer the parents the out-- 'If you want to avoid expulsion we'll let you withdraw the youngster voluntarily.' All parents being concerned about their youngster's reputation choose to withdraw the youngster rather than go through the experience of the expulsion hearing.

"...As I indicated earlier, we do not have any solutions outside of the community itself. We are not committing truants to the Department of Corrections and we are no longer holding them in the Audy Home for in-custody. We are saying in effect to the communities that it's your problem. If you do not take any action the consequences are that in all likelihood you will suffer a higher juvenile delinquency rate, you will suffer much more crime and many more victims of crime."

WITNESS: William London, attorney, Cook County Legal Assistance Foundation

"...I think we can't seriously be concerned about the human waste implicit in the problem of truancy without considering to what extent the schools themselves are culpable, and what I mean by the student pushout is the exclusion of children from public educational systems by the systems themselves. The problem obviously is great where the child is not motivated to go to school, but from my point of view it's an even uglier problem when the schools are pushing them out.

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

"...Children are excluded in various ways, immediately people think in terms of the kid who's expelled for alleged gross misconduct or disobedience; in short, disciplinary problems. But in point of fact children are expelled every day or excluded every day, either in other formal ways or in other less formal, more insidious ways. Retarded children, for example are frequently excluded from the schools where the school board in its wisdom determines that the child can no longer benefit from an education, and some severely retarded children are excluded or prevented from beginning school even in the first place because they say he hasn't reached the mental age that's equivalent to his chronological age.

"...You find exclusion with regard to all types of children. The School Code mandates very specifically that where children are unable to adjust in a regular classroom setting because of social or emotional reasons, they are to be called maladjusted and special provisions are to be made to meet their needs. In point of fact this is not what happens. School boards violate the mandate every day. In some instances, specifically where the child engages in what the traditionalists would call misconduct, schools simply expel those children. Schools are unmindful or insensitive to the fact that the reason the child was acting out, in the case of a maladjusted child, may have been the maladjustment itself.

"...Ninety nine percent of the time school boards refuse to provide alternative education. We have pleaded, we have even gone as far as suing some school boards to get them to provide some kind of alternative. They don't consider it their obligation.

"...We're all confused about the premises underlying exclusion. But apart from that it's been my experience that educators just primarily to an unfortunate degree, lack the proper sensibilities."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

WITNESS: John Aurand, Representative, Illinois Education Association

"...The statistics show that more than 10,000 school age young people are on the streets receiving little or no education while at the same time they may be destined to move into an uncertain future that will include continuous job insecurity and possibly crime. We all have a personal and public responsibility to reverse the growing trend among our young people. What can we do about this alarming situation?

"The following three recommendations I will make are a result of consultation with teacher leaders and deans in the South Cook County area, including the elected governance of the Illinois Education Association in South Cook County. 1) familiarity with the present laws and available agencies is increasingly necessary for teachers, deans, counselors to be aware of. 2) alternative education and additional opportunity adjustments schools need to be established for the habitual school truant. These centers should not be exclusively for students under 16 years of age. These centers can be either permanently located in each school district or mobile. It really doesn't matter. The fact of the matter is that we need more centers, alternative education for boys and girls in Cook County. Two south Cook County districts that are working in this direction are Thornton District 200 and Blue Island District 218 who are sensitive to the needs for alternative education. 3) enforcement of the laws we now have must continue and be increased. Additional pressure must be put on the judges who do not totally enforce the status on parental responsibility.

"Furthermore, there is a crying need for improved coordination between county agencies and this would include hiring additional competent social workers who would visit homes on a continuous program to get to know these children.

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY cont'd

"...I think we need to move toward the alternative education route. I don't know an educator who is against alternative education, but you find teachers and administrators become more frustrated--where do they turn? There's no place to go in many cases because of the lack of funds, and a lack of you might say total cooperation from the federal, state and county level."

WITNESS: Donetta Yates, Attendance Officer, Eisenhower High School

"...One of our district philosophies is, 'Absenteeism is one of the greatest causes of failure and the stepping stone for the student to become a dropout and/or behavior problem in and out of school.' I like to look at the situation this way--that if we could get them to come to school, then we can begin making accommodations.

"...I heard someone say that administrators are insensitive. That's a pretty nutsy idea, that anyone in the schools seriously is insensitive to the needs of the kids. Maybe we are misguided from time to time, but insensitive, that's ridiculous. Anybody who deals with children's problems on a daily basis understands the home situation, has any notion of the fact that a kid who comes to school, who's been in jail and who has a father who beats the hell out of him maybe twice a week, kicks him out on the street from time to time, nobody's going to tell me as an administrator that I don't care about that kid. I'm a woman and I take exception to this kind of thing.

"...I can take a kid who has vocational needs and give him a program that will try to give him something. I will take a kid for half a day as opposed to a whole day if that's the best he can do. In fact, we don't put kids out of school who are truant. We put kids out of school, the regular school, who are disruptive and violent in the behavior and interaction with other kids. But in terms of the kid who just takes to the street from time to time, we always take him back in whenever he is ready to come."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

WITNESS: Lieutenant Vincent Burke, Chicago Police Department and Executive Director of the Illinois Juvenile Officers Association

"...I would say that strict identification with a gang has contributed to the dropout situation, has a real major factor in it whereby the youngster who has gone to the street to seek his identification, and here is where he gains his recognition, and if they (the gang) don't go to school, he isn't going to go to school."

WITNESS: Dr. Charles Thomas, Assistant to State Superintendent of Public Instruction

"...Schools must be viewed as institutions in and of the community. The school must offer something to demonstrate its legitimacy and its sincere interest in the welfare and education of youngsters.

"...School communities must become informed. Parents must no longer stand off and hope things are going as they should. Parents have a right to demand accountability. An active and informed citizenry can be an asset to a public school, not just a boisterous liability. Schools must be attractive and comfortable and yet a place where learning can take place. What may appear to be a frill to the public can be an aid to education."

WITNESS: Jack Newmiller, Principal, Coolidge Upper Grade Center, South Holland, District 151.

"...Most of the ones (truants) that I have gotten directly involved with on this type (short time truancies) have been of two types--they've been either children in foster homes or those from broken homes. We seem to have more of these than anything else, and it seems as though it is harder for these parents to control the students. It isn't that the parents don't want to. It is very much more difficult for them to do it in many cases.

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY -cont'd

"...We do not suspend students for truancy. I think it's a big mistake when you're trying to get them in school, then turn around and put them back out if they come in late. We do have a problem with the student who is suspended though for a couple of days. Many of these same students end up back out in the street instead of under the parents direct supervision where they ought to be."

WITNESS: Guy Vena, President, Chicago Suburban Deans Association, Dean of Students, Arlington High School

Question: "In your experience do you feel that our deans in suburban Cook County are insensitive and aware of the due process and student rights?"

Witness: "I think they are. I had occasion to do down to Peoria, the Illinois State Deans Convation, and there was much concern at that time about Dr. Bakalis' Student Bill of Rights, and it seemed to me in talking to a lot of deans at this meeting that the Chicago suburban deans did not express too much concern because they mentioned that they were doing what they felt was right and they were giving the students due process."

WITNESS: Nancy Sharp, Unit Supervisor, Illinois Department of Corrections

"...It is perhaps an understatement to say that truancy is not a new problem. Equally as true is that where there is excessive truancy there is usually a higher rate of delinquency. When a truant reaches the Department of Corrections he is no longer called a truant, but rather he has been adjudicated and tagged delinquent."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

"...At the present time in the City of Chicago there are 2,250 youths on parole. It would be safe to estimate that 75% of these youths came to the attention of the court because of truancy and at least 85% were returned to court for subsequent hearings because of truancy problems.

"...We feel strongly that to alleviate delinquency or to eradicate delinquency we must also work to eradicate truancy. In all of my comments about the truant you will notice that I did not state at any point that anyone attempted to deal with the reasons why the child was truant from school, and I feel that this is a very paramount reason or problem that we must attack."

WITNESS: Patrick Kennan, teacher, member of the DePaul University College of Law Faculty, and attorney.

"...Compulsory attendance seems to be based on the assumptions first of all, that it's proper for the state to have that kind of power over individuals, secondly, that attending school on a regular daily basis is good for the student and third that the student by going to the school every day is going to learn something, and fourth, that as a result of attending that school every day under compulsion the student will somehow turn out to be a useful citizen.

"...All those assumptions are subject to close examination and in some cases, outright rejection, because it just isn't so.

"...I am suggesting to the public officials concerned with education that the whole blame should not be put on the student. What it will take (alternative education programs) is a recognition on the part of the people who run the schools that the education that is offered which is of necessity...is simply not appropriate for many of the students which we, as citizens and as officials have the constitutional and statutory duty to educate and who must be educated and who have the right to an education."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd.

WITNESS: Dr. Lowell Johnson, Superintendent, School District 218

"...The first thing I would like to make perfectly clear from our standpoint and our beliefs in District 218, is the fact that students do leave school. They leave because they have educational problems. There may be some home problems which are related to personal ones which we cannot get at, and some leave because of an academic orientation in our schools.

"...I feel we've tried to go through due process. There are some young people and we just have to face it, they just can't face it five clock hours a day and we have the knowledge that...and I think we're going to have to go to alternative programs, and I think that maybe the young people who were in these programs recognized maybe there were some people who cared for them, and they came back there earlier and said we're going to stick it out. We're going to go through it."

WITNESS: Dr. Richard Carrabine, Superintendent, District 206

"...I have to agree with the attorney here who indicates that at least from his point of view that the compulsory attendance laws...should not be extended to take in any more years as far as students are concerned. We are having difficulty enough by having the students in the building until age 16. I agree that punitive measures with respect to truants is certainly not the answer."

WITNESS: Judge John P. McGury, Juvenile Court

"...This whole problem is a problem for the community. Whether the schools are bearing a disproportionate burden of the whole problem is another matter.

"...I think we send about seven or eight hundred (juveniles) a year from the Juvenile Court's truancy call to Parental Schools, and I would say...80% of them are boys."

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

WITNESS: William Murphy, Attendance Officer, City of Chicago

"...I think too that Attendance Officers at the present time are not confined just to the work of the school. They're taking a more...I should say a broadening type of work in the community organizations. They work in community organizations, meet with parents, parent-teacher groups, and they try to solve or to create an interest of the parents in the community, to see that their children go to school, and if there's any need that is recognized, and if they can help, they will.

WITNESS: Jack Oberhart, Director of Attendance for the Chicago Public Schools

"...One thing that comes through if you ask students is their dislike for school. They hate school, and yet they will say they want an education. All dropouts say, 'Yes, I want an education, but I hate school,' and I think we have been and we have used in the past the two terms interchangeably and obviously they are not. If somebody wants something but is not willing to accept it in the fashion that it's given, something is wrong.

"...If we could bring some efforts to bear early at the elementary level, we perhaps might reduce the number of truancies and dropouts that we encounter at the secondary level."

WITNESS: James Gottreich, Director, Youth Services Department, Cook County Sheriff's Office

"...There are a great many reasons for truancy which unfortunately as I can view it, the schools do not really deal with.

"...The school response usually to a student that either cuts a few classes or is habitually truant is to either suspend or expel the student. This seems to me not only counterproductive but puts us in something of an insane situation where in order to compel someone to attend school, we forcibly eject them from school.

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd

"...To say that the parent should be responsible for bringing young people to school or for coercing the child to going to school begs the question as well, because in many cases the reason for the truant is the parent in the first place."

WITNESS: William Dismuke, Assistant Principal, Washington School, District 170.

"...I've had a lot of success in dealing with students myself. Just having day-to-day contact with them, talking to them, find out their problems, sometimes they're disgusted with school and we try to find out what it is, and try to find out what we can do to make them as happy as possible within the school."

WITNESS: Dr. Benedict Mayers, Attorney, Professor, City Colleges of Chicago, Chairman of Norwood Park Township Youth Commission

"...It is my considered opinion that a lot of the truancy that we are experiencing about juveniles, especially at the high school level, is truancy that begins probably in the home. Before the child reaches age five or six, the groundwork is laid for truancy that will occur later. By this I mean that if the parents don't do the work in preparing the child for the school experience, the child will come into the school at a handicap, and will increase as he remains in school and fails to meet the requirements laid down by the school authorities. So we go about the problem really a little late, because the problem manifests itself around age two or three.

"...I think that a work/study program ought to be instituted immediately upon the child's entering high school because there are some children who are not academically oriented and who are not going to be academically oriented and they

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY - cont'd.

ought to be prepared for the workaday world instead of studying subjects that prepare them for college which they will never reach."

WITNESS: Elbert Smith, Dean of Students, Maine Township High School District

"...I would like to suggest that the compulsory school age be from six to fourteen. If you made school optional, maybe we would have more people come. If people know that they have to do something, they are forced to do it, they will put off doing it as long as they can. I would like to see high school made optional. Another suggestion I'd like to see is average daily attendance thrown out. I'd like to see an average enrollment for the school for state aid. Then there wouldn't be the pressure on our attendance office and our administration to see that we get every child to school every day.

WITNESS: Gene Weir, Truant Officer, Educational Service Region of Cook County

"...For September, October and November, we had 602 truants reported to our office.

Question: Do you find that your three truant officers are an adequate staff?

Answer: "No, I was listening to testimony yesterday where Chicago has 290 truant officers for the Chicago district schools. Our school system (suburbs) has 146 districts and some 700 schools, with a population of 470,000 students.

WITNESS: Anonymous parent of truant teenager

"...When the boy was in fourth or fifth grade, we saw some tendency...of emotional disturbance. We thought...about psychological testing--the principal

EXCERPTS FROM TESTIMONY -cont'd-

thought at that time it wasn't necessary. We felt that the principal was trying to protect her record in the school and let it go at that. He (his son) tended to get worse in the later grades where when he got to seventh and eighth, there was a high rate of truancy. It was recommended that he enroll in one of the special education programs (in high school). The boy was not accepted in any of the programs because, to quote the administrator, all the programs were running smooth and they did not want any ripples in the program by adding him."